Claims:

1. Semi-finished product for making plug-in contacts in plug-in connectors for electric DC power systems in motor vehicles which are operated at a nominal voltage at which electric arcing may occur, having an electrically conductive main body made of a non-precious metallic material that carries, at least in part, a contact-making coating of a material more precious than the material of the main body, **characterized in that** the coating has a thickness of at least 0.3 µm and consists of silver or of a silver-based alloy with an addition that will not form an alloy with silver or with the silver-based alloy, or will at best form a precipitation alloy, and which has a higher melting point than silver.

2. The semi-finished product as defined in Claim 1, **characterized in that** the coating has a thickness of maximally 10 µm.

3. The semi-finished product as defined in Claim 1, **characterized in that** the coating has a thickness of maximally 5 µm.

4. The semi-finished product as defined in Claim 1, **characterized in that** the coating has a thickness of 0.5 µm to 4 µm.

5. The semi-finished product as defined in any of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the addition is contained in the silver or in the silver-based alloy in an amount of at least 0.2 percent by weight.

6. The semi-finished product as defined in any of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the addition is contained in the silver or in the silver-based alloy in an amount of at least 0.5 percent by weight.

7. The semi-finished product as defined in any of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the addition is contained in the silver or in the silver-based alloy in an amount of maximally 50 percent by weight.

8. The semi-finished product as defined in any of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the addition is contained in the silver or in the silver-based alloy in an amount of maximally 30 percent by weight.

9. The semi-finished product as defined in any of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the addition is contained in the silver or in the silver-based alloy in an amount of maximally 15 percent by weight.

10. The semi-finished product as defined in any of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the addition comprises one or more substances taken from the group of the following substances: Tungsten, molybdenum, graphite, nickel, cobalt and metal oxides, especially tin oxide and zinc oxide, as well as tungsten carbide and molybdenum carbide.

11. The semi-finished product as defined in any of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the coating is deposited by a PVD process, especially by sputtering.

12. The semi-finished product as defined in any of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** a material from the following group is selected as material for the main body:

(a) CuNiSi(X): Materials designated C7025, C7026 according to CDA, for example;

(b) CuFeP: Materials designated C194, C19210 according to CDA, for example;

(c) CuSn: Materials designated C521, C511, C14415, according to CDA, for example;

(d) CuZn: Materials designated C272, C230, C260 according to CDA, for example;

(e) CuCrSiTi(X): Materials designated C18070, C18080, C18090 according to CDA, for example;

(f) CuNiSn: Materials designated C72500, C19025 according to CDA, for example;

(g) CuSnZn: Materials designated C663, C425 according to CDA, for example;

(h) CuNiZn: Materials designated C75700, C77000, C76400 according to CDA, for example;

(i) CuBe: Materials designated C17100, C17410, C17200 according to CDA, for example;

(j) CuTi: Materials from the family of materials designated C19900 according to CDA, for example,

(k) Stainless steel: Materials designated
1.4310 according to DIN 17224,
1.4311 according to DIN 17440,
1.4406 according to DIN 17440,
1.4428 according to DIN 17443,
1.4429 according to DIN 17440,
1.4568 according to DIN 17224,
1.4841 according to DIN 17224,
1.4318, 1.1231, 1.1248, 1.1269, 1.1274, 1.5029 according to DIN V 17006-100.

13. The semi-finished product as defined in any of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the product is a strip.

14. The semi-finished product as defined in Claim 13, **characterized in that** the strip is pre-punched.

15. The semi-finished product as defined in any of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the coating consists of silver with a tungsten or molybdenum content of 4 to 6 % by volume, and is applied in a thickness of 0.5 µm to 5 µm.

16. The semi-finished product as defined in any of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** a diffusion-inhibiting intermediate layer is provided between the main body and the contact-making coating.

17. The semi-finished product as defined in Claim 16, **characterized in that** the intermediate layer consists of silver or nickel.

18. The semi-finished product as defined in any of the preceding claims, **characterized in that** the concentration of the addition in the silver or silver-alloy coating is lower at the surface of the coating than in the deeper region of the coating.

19. Plug-in contacts for electric plug-in connectors made from a semi-finished product according to any of the preceding claims.

20. The use of plug-in contacts as defined in Claim 19 in electric power systems of automobiles, which are operated at a nominal voltage at which arcing may occur, especially in 42 Volt DC power systems.

21. Method for making a semi-finished product as defined in any of Claims 1 to 18 by PVD coating of a strip, consisting of a non-precious metallic material, with silver or a silver-based alloy with an addition, which has a higher melting point than silver and which does not form an alloy, or at best a separation alloy, with the silver or the silver-based alloy.

22. The method as defined in Claim 21, **characterized in that** coating is effected by sputtering.

23. The method as defined in Claim 21, **characterized in that** the components of the coating are deposited simultaneous or in a fashion overlapping in time.

24. The method as defined in Claim 23, **characterized in that the** ratio of the separation rates of the components of the coating is altered during the separation process.

25. The method as defined in Claim 24, **characterized in that** the ratio between the separation rate of the addition and the separation rate of the silver or the silver alloy is reduced toward the end of the separation process.